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THE
LAMB OF GOD.







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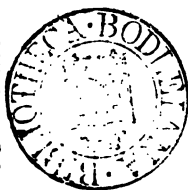
THE
LAMB OF GOD.

BY

J. M. CRAMP, D.D.,

Author of "A Text-Book of Popery," "Baptist History,"

&c. &c.



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TO MY FRIENDS.

IN other works, historical and controversial, I have endeavoured to set forth, clearly and impartially, the course of events, and to defend truth. It is hoped that some benefit has been derived therefrom by inquiring and thoughtful readers.

I am now in the seventy-fifth year of my age, and cannot expect to render much more service to the Church of God. "The days of the years of my pilgrimage" are drawing to a close.

This little book, containing the substance of several sermons, is designed as a final testimony on behalf

of those precious truths which constitute the Gospel of Christ. As it is not sensational or fictitious, which classes of writings are all the rage in these times, I could not expect to gain anything by publishing it in the usual way. I send it among you, therefore, in this private manner, trusting that some souls will be profited, and the Great Master honoured.

WOLFVILLE, NOVA SCOTIA.

April 19, 1871.

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THE LAMB OF GOD.

CHAPTER I.

“BEHOLD THE LAMB.”

“THESE things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing”—John i. 28. It is a singular fact that all the old manuscripts read “Bethany;” but no place bearing that name has been discovered on the eastern side of the Jordan. Origen, in the third century, found a place in the neighbourhood named “Bethabara,” and it was believed that our Lord was baptized there. But, as I said, the oldest manuscripts read “Bethany.” Now, “Bethabara” means “the house of the ford,” indicating that the Jordan

might be crossed there ; and there was a ford at "Beth-barah," which "the men of Ephraim" seized, in Gideon's time, to prevent the escape of the Midianites, after his great victory (Judges vii. 24). "Bethany" means "the house of dates," that tree being probably abundant in the district. If a conjecture may be hazarded, there was a village called "Bethany" *at the ford*. At first it was nothing but a caravansary, or Eastern hotel—*the house at the ford*. By degrees a village grew up around it, to which the trees in the neighbourhood furnished a name. But the exact site has been long unknown.

John had recently baptized Jesus there. It was then that the Baptist attained his highest honour : for he saw the descending dove, and he

heard the voice from heaven—“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” He was himself at the height of his popularity. So much attention was attracted by his preaching, and such expectations were formed of him, that a deputation was sent from Jerusalem to inquire into the character of his proceedings, and learn his plans and purposes. He gave plain answers to all questions. He told the inquirers that he was not the Messiah—that he was not Elijah—that he was not “that prophet” (perhaps the reference was to Deut. xviii. 18)—that he was only a “voice”—“the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord.” He announced a greater than himself as just about to appear, and that HE

would baptize "with the Holy Ghost." The Master was coming: the servant must retire. "He must increase, but I must decrease." With such humility did he address the listening crowds who hung upon his lips. He would not magnify himself at the expense of his Lord. Admirable man!

Jesus had withdrawn from the place of his baptism, being "led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. iv. 1). No one knew where he was gone. There were many inquiries about him, but no information could be obtained. Nor do we now know whither he was "led." Probably it was somewhere in the hilly district of Southern Judæa. The mountain "Quarantania," near Jericho, which has been traditionally regarded as

,

the scene of the forty days' temptation, seems less likely to have been the spot than the "hill country" of Judæa, where the "wild beasts" (Mark i. 13) might be more easily found, that district being thinly peopled.

At the end of six weeks Jesus one day re-appeared, in the neighbourhood of Bethabara (or Bethany), where John was still baptizing. As soon as the Baptist saw him he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

There was deep meaning in these words. The Spirit spake by John. Here was a declaration of the great design of the Saviour's coming, antedating all his own teachings, and placing before the minds of the astonished disciples the truth, which

was to be the food and solace of the Church in all ages. It was then a time of earnest expectation. Many "looked for redemption;" but some desired and hoped for a temporal rather than a spiritual deliverance. John cut up that hope by the roots. The Deliverer stood before them; the Deliverer—not from Roman bondage, but from the guilt and power of sin—not of Israel only, but of the world. Strange, glorious proclamation! How few understood it! Too many, alas, in this nineteenth century, fail to perceive its meaning, or haughtily reject it. Let us humbly inquire into the mind of the Lord.

Lambs had been offered in sacrifice, under the authority of the law of Moses, for fifteen hundred years. Every morning and evening a lamb

smoked upon the altar. On the Sabbath days the offering was double. Then there was the Passover lamb, slain in every family once a year, and in sin-offerings, trespass-offerings, as well as on many occasions of voluntary service, the blood of the Lamb was shed. Perhaps some of the Jews thought that a real atonement was made at those times; but the better instructed knew that such sacrifices “would not take away sin.” They taught the need of atonement, and typified the future deliverer, God’s anointed one, who was to be “led like a lamb to the slaughter,” and whose soul was to be “made an offering for sin.”

Great stress was laid on the purity of the animal, which was to be literally “without blemish and without spot.” The slightest defect would

be fatal to its fitness for the sacrifice ; and Jesus, "the Lamb of God," was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). He passed through childhood and youth to the full maturity of manhood, encountering the temptations incident to the most dangerous period of human life, without incurring the imputation of immorality or laxness of behaviour. Though he walked continually among formalists he did not lose the fervour of piety. He consorted with sinners, but he contracted no defilement. All duties, personal, domestic, social and public, were discharged with conscientious promptitude. The active virtues, too, shone brilliantly in his character and conduct. He was always ready to teach the ignorant and help the wretched. No day passed without

witnessing some deed of benevolence. He “went about doing good” (Acts x. 38). He traversed “all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people; and his fame spread throughout all Syria; and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them” (Matt. iv. 23, 24). He never turned away an applicant. In short, He “loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His mind, and with all His strength, and He loved his neighbour as Himself” (Mark xii. 30, 31). He

could appeal to His bitterest enemies and say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John viii. 46). He could dare the scrutiny of the devil; "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30). He went to the very end of the law, and did not neglect "a jot or a tittle." He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21).

But He knew sorrow. He saw it, and sympathized with the sufferers. He felt it—felt it more keenly than others, because His sensibilities were more delicate; and pain, as he endured it, was terribly acute. The dulness of His disciples and the carnality of their religion vexed Him. The unbelieving obstinacy of the teaching and ruling classes grieved Him to the heart. When He wept at the grave of Lazarus, it

was a natural outburst of feeling, such a gushing forth of tenderness as warm friendship not uncommonly produces. But the tears which He shed on Mount Olivet, when He looked down on the unbelieving city, betokened deep-seated anguish, a surging tumult of emotions, excited by His view of the peril of sinners, and His holy hatred of their sin. Far more intense was the agony in Gethsemane. Who can conceive of a thousandth part of that horror? The “power of darkness” was let loose upon Him; pangs inconceivable were passed through; His soul was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” “and His body was so affected that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Matt. xxvi. 38; Luke xxii. 44). So great was

the pressure that the humanity sunk under it, and an angel was sent from heaven to "strengthen" Him (Luke xxii. 43). The mockings and brutalities of the judgment-hall followed. Yet this was more bearable than was the burden that crushed His soul when "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him," and He was "made sin for us" (Isa. liii. 10; 2 Cor. v. 21). Then He felt the power of the curse: "the pains of hell gat hold upon Him;" and the bitterness of His distress wrung from Him the exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" That scene cannot be described. It was not meant to be. Darkness covered it. Both the physical and the mental torture elude conception. The conflict was unutterable. The earth shook, and even the heavens

were veiled in blackness, when the Lamb of God was slain.

Martyrs in after times went triumphantly to the scaffold or the stake, and never looked so joyous as when they “resisted unto blood.” But the Son of God was abandoned and sorely “put to grief.” We cannot fathom it. “Thought is poor, and poor expression.” This we know, however, that the Lord’s sufferings were not disciplinary, for He “did no sin.” They were not punitive, for there was nothing to punish. We know also that they were voluntarily endured. “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John x. 17, 18). Even when he was sinking in death the majesty of Divine love displayed itself. He held His soul in His own

power, and yielded it up to His Heavenly Father.

“And there dwelt about Him still,
About His drooping head and fainting
limbs,
A sense of power, as though He chose to
die,
Yet might have shaken off the load of
death
Without an effort.”—MILMAN.

Why, then, did the Lamb of God suffer and die ; suffer so cruelly, and die such a shameful death ? We find the answer in the Baptist’s announcement. It is confirmed by many other passages of Scripture. Jesus “loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” He was “set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood.” His soul was made “an offering for sin.” Having as-

sumed the sinner's place, He endured the inflictions of the law which the sinner had violated. He was “made sin for us,” that is, treated as a sinner on our account. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed” (Ephes. v., 25; Rom. iii. 25; Isa. liii. 5).

Had he been merely a man, however good, even to blamelessness, those sufferings would not have been meritorious. No creature of God can do or endure more than His holy law requires. Merit, therefore, is impossible. But “the Lamb of God” was not a mere creature, or created being. He who suffered on the cross was “Immanuel, God with us.” “God manifest in the flesh”

(Isa. vii. 14; Matt. i. 23; 1 Tim. iii. 16). He "came forth from the Father," and "was made flesh;" and "though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich" (John xvi. 28, i. 14; 2 Cor. viii. 9). His acts were of infinite value. As man, he owed obedience to the law. As God, he honoured the law by obeying it. His death was not the criminal's, rightly demanded by the law; it was the death of the Divine surety. He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24). Oceans of blood were shed under the Mosaic institute, yet "could not take away sin;" but Christ was "once offered to bear the sins of many," and now we say, "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the

unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. ix. 13, 14, 28).

It was God’s plan—God’s appointment—God’s gift. The death of the Saviour did not dispose the Heavenly Father to mercy. Dr. Watts was utterly mistaken when he penned these lines :—

“ Rich were the drops of Jesus’ blood,
Which calmed his frowning face ;
Which sprinkled o’er the burning throne,
And turned the wrath to grace.”

Very different are the statements of Holy Writ. “ God so loved the world, that he gave His only be-

gotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 10). The world could not be saved illegally, so to speak. The charter of redemption must be based on pure, changeless equity. The problem of the ages was solved when Jesus died. God's love provided the sacrifice. The death of the heavenly Lamb was of untold efficacy. It honoured and satisfied the law. It declared God's righteousness: He is now "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26).

There are no limits. There cannot be, in the very nature of the case. The deity of the Lord Jesus

gives immeasurable value to His sacrifice. If the salvation of one sinner required no less, the salvation of all sinners would require no more. The “Lamb of God . . . taketh away the sin of the world,” that is, the redemption He has accomplished is sufficient for the salvation of the world.

But it does not follow that all the world will be saved. Christ is “a propitiation through faith in His blood” (Rom. iii. 25). His atonement is efficacious to those only who believe, and to all such ; as none are ruined by Adam’s sin but those who have made it their own by actual transgression, so none are saved by the death of the Lamb but those who believe and thereby make that death the sole ground of their hope towards God. “It is of faith, that

it might be by grace " (Romans iv. 16).

Dear reader,—let us rejoice in Divine love. God says, "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18). Let us believe God. Let us meet Him on Calvary, and be at peace.

"My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of thine:
White like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin."

"Behold the Lamb of God!"
Here is a sight worth looking at.
See God "in Christ reconciling the
world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19).
Hear His own blessed voice—"Look
unto me, and be ye saved, all the

ends of the earth" (Isa. xlix. 22). Weigh well the terms of this proclamation. It does not *permit*, but *invites*. And the invitation is direct. No preparation is needed. You cannot qualify yourselves for mercy, or acquire a fitness for grace. Jesus says, Come—come at once—come just as you are—and "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37).

"Compliance with His will your lot ensures ;

Accept it only, and the boon is yours.

And sure it is as kind to smile and give,
As with a frown to say, Do this, and live.

Love is not pedlar's trumpery, bought and sold ;

He will give freely, or he will withhold ;

His soul abhors a mercenary thought,

And him as deeply who abhors it not ;

He stipulates indeed, but merely this,

That man will freely take an unbought
bliss,
Will trust him for a faithful generous
part,
Nor set a price upon a willing heart."

COWPER.

CHAPTER II.

“THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE LAMB.”

THE work is done. Jesus has obtained “the joy set before him” (Heb. xii. 2). He has “ascended on high;” He has “led captivity captive;” “He has received gifts for men” (Psalm lxviii. 18). The exalted ones in heaven admire and adore, and angels sing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. v. 12).

The rule of the world is placed in His hands. “Angels, and authorities, and powers” are “made subject to Him,” and He is “head over

all things to the Church" (1 Pet. iii. 22 ; Ephes. i. 22). He commenced His government while yet on earth, by an act of Divine benevolence, issuing a commission to His Apostles to "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). He carries it on in heaven on the same principle, and continually "sends forth labourers into His harvest" (Matt. ix. 38).

This is God's plan of action. The death of His beloved Son has removed all obstacles, and opened the way for the pardon and reconciliation of the rebellious. But this is not all. A remedy is only available when it is taken or applied. "By the commandment of the everlasting God" the Gospel is to be "made known among all nations for the

obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 26). For this purpose the "twelve Apostles of the Lamb" were directed to bear the message of mercy to their fellow men in all countries. They were prepared for the great enterprise by the special gifts of the Holy Spirit. The "King of kings" intrusted his ambassadors to beseech men, "in Christ's stead," to be "reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20).

"The twelve Apostles of the Lamb." This phrase is susceptible of a twofold illustration.

SECTION I.—*The connection of the Apostles with the Saviour.*

The completion of the work of redemption is implied. The "Lamb of God" is now presented to our notice, not as suffering, but as

reigning, and sending forth His messengers to announce the fact, and call upon men to submit to him.

“By one offering,” says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, “He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. x. 14). This thought is frequently brought before us in the Epistle. The sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice—“once for all”—is the golden thread that enriches and beautifies that portion of the Divine volume. The Romish novelty of the mass—the pretended offering up of Christ every time the Lord’s Supper is celebrated, even in its mutilated form, the wine being withheld—was not then invented. Believers did not go to a priest to offer for them the sacrifice afresh. They rejoiced in the finished work. Yes; *it is* finished. No man can

add to it. No man can take away from it. No man can repeat it. The believer of the nineteenth century stands on the same foundation as the believer of the first.

But, as has been observed, it was not enough that Jesus died, and that in this way a provision was made for the salvation of men. How is it to be accomplished? There was a necessity for some arrangement whereby the designs of mercy might be carried into effect. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" (Rom. x. 14—17).

The Apostles *were* "sent." The Lamb sent them. And why did He send them? Not to excite admiration—not to set before men a bright and holy example, by imitating which they might save their own souls—not to direct the sinner to work out his salvation by painful deeds of merit; but to bring him to the cross, and urge him to cast off his burden there.

"So I saw in my dream," says Bunyan, "that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the sepulcher, where it fell in, and I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, 'He hath given me

rest by His sorrow ; and life by His death.’ Then he stood still a while to look and wonder ; for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked, therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. Now, as he stood looking and weeping, behold three shining ones came to him, and saluted him with ‘Peace be to thee :’ so the first said to him, ‘Thy sins be forgiven.’ The second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment. The third also set a mark in his forehead, and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the Celestial Gate ; so they went their way. Then Christian

gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing." *

Jesus did not shed His blood in vain. It was foretold that he should "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied" (Isa. liii. 11). That prophecy has been in course of fulfilment ever since the day of Pentecost. Then the "Apostles of the Lamb" entered on their great undertaking. Their mission was to turn men "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts xxvi. 18). And how? Not by eloquence—not by art—not by terror—not by philosophy. "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the

* Pilgrim's Progress, p. 39 (Hanserd Knollys Society's Edition).

Greeks foolishness ; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God " (1 Cor. i. 22—24). The greatest revolution the world had ever seen was to be effected by means which the world deemed powerless, and its would-be wise men despised. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me " (John xii. 32).

"Let us suppose the problem had been given, to find a method of bringing men to embrace a new religion. How different would have been the schemes of the wise and learned from that which is here expressed by our blessed Saviour ! I hear the votary of natural reason, the adorer of human learning and intellect, exclaim, 'Let your new religion be invested with the charac-

ters of deep philosophy ; let it appeal to the dialectics of the logician, and the subtleties of human science—thus will it make its way in the world.’ Ah no ! ‘*I, if I be lifted up*, will draw all men unto me.’

“I hear another exclaim, ‘Adorn it with the splendid diction of Greece and Rome ; introduce it to the notice of mankind in the trappings of an overpowering eloquence ; clothe it with the thunders of a Demosthenes, or the golden periods of a Tully, so will you attract crowds and invite disciples ! Ah no ! ‘*I, if I be lifted up*, will draw all men unto me.’

“I hear still another, the admirer of earthly splendour, exclaim, ‘Decorate your new religion with the splendour of rank, the refinements of eloquence, the magnificence of royalty ; let it charm the eye and

capture the heart by its external pomp, and so shall it become popular, so shall it win universal suffrage and approbation.’ Still wrong ; the ways of God are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts ; He needed nothing splendid, or eloquent, or philosophical ; the cross of Christ was enough ; ‘ *I, if I be lifted up.* ’ ” *

“Apostles of the Lamb.” How He cared for them ! How tenderly did He watch over them ! Peter was in prison, and expected to be led forth to execution on the morrow. It did not trouble him, for he, too, had a “desire to depart, and to be with Christ ” (Phil. i. 23). But the Lord had more work for him to do, and twenty years or more of suffering to endure ere he should be at

* *Christian Observer*, Dec. 1818, p. 777.

rest; and so He "sent His angel" to deliver His servant. Paul was "pressed in spirit" at Corinth, and sore set upon by envious and cruel Jews. The Lord knew it, and "spake to him by night in a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city" (Acts xviii. 9, 10). John rose in melancholy mood on that memorable Lord's Day morning, thinking of his brethren, with whom he had gone to the house of God in company, and longing for the renewal of the "times of refreshing." Perhaps he was musing on the Lord's promise. "Lo, I am with you alway," and wondering at the mystery of the dispensation by which the promise seemed to be in abeyance, as to him-

self, on that desolate isle. The Master was nigh—nigher than he thought. Suddenly he found himself "in the Spirit." He heard a voice; he saw a vision; "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. i. 17, 18). Yes, the "Apostles of the Lamb" are dear to Him.

He makes use of them still. Their feet no longer tread the earth; their wanderings have ceased; but, being dead, they yet speak. The commission is fulfilled in their writings, by which "their sound" is gone unto all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom. x. 18).

Matthew and Peter, Paul and John, preach continually, enlightening the minds, moving the hearts, shaping the lives of men in all the diversified forms of society, and producing everywhere, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that uniform Christian character for the creation and maintenance of which the Saviour taught, and prayed, and bled, and died, and rose again. Spiritual life is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3). Those who believe in Apostolic truths "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Rev. xiv. 4).

We adore the grace and faithfulness of the Head of the Church. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Ephes. iv. 2). The higher orders are extinct. Some maintain

that the line of "evangelists" is continued; some doubt it. But "pastors and teachers" remain. The succession of "faithful men, able to teach others" (2 Tim. ii. 2), has been preserved. The outward links are not visible. No man can establish his claim by the production of an undoubted, continuous ecclesiastical pedigree. Nor would it avail him if he could. The true succession is the succession of faith and holiness. Jesus has preserved that succession. Wherever a man is found who preaches Christ—the Prophet, Priest, and King—and whose life accords with His teachings, there is a true Apostolical.

SECTION II.—*The connection of the Apostles with the Church.*

The walls of the spiritual Jerusa-

lem have "twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. xxi. 14).

What is the meaning of this? Paul says, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 11). In another place we find him stating that the church is "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone" (Ephes. ii. 20). In both passages there is probably an allusion to Isa. xxviii. 16, where it is foretold that the Messiah would be God's foundation laid "*in* Zion," to indicate that from Zion, literally, "the law" should "go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. lvi. 1), and at the same time that *on* which the

true Zion, the Church of God, would rest. That church is composed of “living stones,” which are “built up a spiritual house” (1 Peter ii. 5). First, the “corner stone,” Christ Himself, is laid. Closely joined thereto are the Apostles and prophets; then, all believers; and so the building is “fitly framed together,” and “groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Ephes. ii. 21). In one point of view, Christ is the sole foundation; prophets, apostles, Christians, rest on Him, and owe all to Him. He is the “rock” on which the church is built. In another point of view, the church being “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. iii. 15), which she exhibits to the world as a faithful witness, derives her light, holiness, and comfort from the “manifestation of the

truth" by "the Apostles of the Lamb," who received it from the Lord Himself, "THE TRUTH." The condescending Master identifies Himself with His servants; His interests and theirs are the same. Their work, as His first messengers to the world, was so important that they are represented, in conjunction with Him, as constituting the foundation of the spiritual building, while He is the "chief corner-stone," binding and uniting all together.

The illustration is varied in Rev. xxi. 14. There the foundation is said to be twelvefold, as consisting of twelve courses or layers, each course having inscribed on it the name of an Apostle. The original number, "twelve," is preserved, whereas, if the election of Matthias was valid (which some have doubted,

though, it would seem, with little reason), there were *thirteen*, Paul having been subsequently appointed by the Lord Himself. But that need not occasion any difficulty. It had become customary to speak of "the twelve," that being the number of which the original body was constituted ("then of the twelve," 1 Cor. xv. 5; when there were but *eleven*); just as we read of "the twelve tribes" (Acts xxvi. 7; James i. 1), though the tribal distinction had ceased to exist; and in the passage now alluded to, the "twelve Apostles of the Lamb" are spoken of, although, as has been observed, there were in reality *thirteen*.

The twelve foundations were "garnished with all manner of precious stones," that is, each foundation consisted of a precious stone. "The

first foundation was jasper, the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst" (Rev. xxi. 19, 20). May we, without incurring the charge of fancifulness, venture to suggest the design of this representation?

Does it indicate *value*, as jewels are "precious?" Then the figure is highly appropriate. What can be more valuable to man than a revelation from heaven, duly authenticated, disclosing the character and purposes of God, and His will, both as to morals and to worship? Philosophers reasoned and speculated, and affected to be the guides of their

fellow-creatures ; but there was no certainty in their conclusions, and the divisions among themselves were fatal to their authority. The “twelve Apostles of the Lamb” were teachers of a different order. Their claims to submissive regard were founded on the “signs and wonders” which accompanied their teaching, that teaching being further shown to be divine in its origin by its contrariety to their former views, and the impossibility of such conceptions being framed by Jewish minds, unless specially taught of God. The Apostles were utterly unable to invent Christianity. In the writings of these wonderful men, we have truth, pure, wholesome, unalloyed, “all the counsel of God.”

Does it indicate *variety*? These precious stones varied in colour,

form, and conventional value. But they were all jewels. So it is in the Church of God. The Apostles were equal in power, and authority ; their talents, gifts, and qualifications, however, differed exceedingly. The energy (not to say impetuosity) of Peter, the burning zeal of James, the amiableness of his brother John, the calculating prudence of Philip, the profundity of Paul, combined as it was with administration powers of no common kind—all found scope for employment. “Ye have not chosen me,” said the Lord, “but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain ” (John xv. 16). Similar variety and adaptation have been witnessed in all ages. The intrepid Luther, the mild Melanchthon, the

wise Calvin, the cautious Cranmer, the honest Latimer, each occupied his appropriate niche, and did his own work. "All these worketh that one and the selfsame spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. xii. 11).

And does it not indicate *unity*? The twelve precious stones constituted one foundation. "One star differeth from another star in glory" (1 Cor. xv. 41). But the source of light is the same, and they all help to diffuse it. Paul, it may be, never preached such a successful sermon as that which Peter delivered on the day of Pentecost; Peter was by no means so apt at organizing churches as Paul; John was probably better fitted to follow others than to originate movement of his own accord; but they all preached the same

Gospel, and each, in the sphere appointed by the Head of the Church, was "the right man in the right place." Every one was not a jasper, or a sapphire, or an emerald ; but they were all jewels.

The successors of the Apostles have ever been appointed by the Lord Himself. "He counted me faithful," said Paul, "putting me into the ministry" (1 Tim. i. 12). It was a "grace given" to him (Ephes. iii. 8). And it is so still. The Church must look to the Saviour for her ministers, beseeching Him to bestow gifts for service on whomsoever He will, while she watchfully observes the process, and stands ready to avail herself of the blessing. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth

labourers into His harvest" (Matt. ix. 38).

In managing this matter, largeness of heart is required as well as skill and discernment. We should be as careful not to frown down modest talent as to check forwardness. Above all, we should seek for tokens of the Lord's will. If the Master has called any one to the work, woe be to the minister or the Church that shall stand in his way. Eliab sneered at the "pride and naughtiness of heart" of the shepherd boy who had come down, as he said, "to see the battle" (1 Sam. xvii. 28). But David killed the giant. What became of Eliab does not appear.



CHAPTER III.

THE LAMB AND THE SEALED BOOK.

IN the fifth chapter of the Book of the Revelation, God is represented as sitting on the throne of His glory. He is attended by the representatives of the whole universe of being. His Church is there, in the persons of symbolical creatures, each embodying some aspect of spiritual humanity. All adore and praise. All are satisfied with God as He is. All are happy in His service.

In His right hand the Divine Being holds a sealed book. It is a book of Hebrew make. A sheet of parchment, written on both sides, in columns of suitable width, is rolled

round a wooden cylinder, and a seal attached to it, which keeps it fast. Another is then rolled round that, and also sealed; and so on, till seven sheets have been used in the same manner, and each separately fastened. It is now "a book," and it is "sealed with seven seals." But it cannot be read till the seals are broken, and only one seal can be broken at a time. When the outer seal has been detached, the outside sheet may be unrolled and read, all the remainder being still unclosed, and therefore unknown. Thus the book can only be read sheet by sheet, as the seals are unloosed.

The context leads us to conclude that on this mysterious roll of a book are inscribed the purposes of God respecting the course of events by which the world's history is to

be diversified. All are recorded there, but nothing can be known of the record till some one is found "worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof." Proclamation is made. The most intense interest is excited; but for a while blank disappointment sits on all faces. "No man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." Sadness is felt among the angelic hosts. Heaven itself seems to be in mourning, and the apostolic seer sympathises with the sorrow. "I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon." That interval of suspense was mercifully shortened. A celestial messenger announces glad tidings. "One of the elders saith

unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." The Apostle turns to behold, and lo! not a lion, but a lamb, comes upon the scene—"a lamb as it had been slain"—that is to say, fresh from the slaughter, with all the marks of death by shedding of the blood. He approaches the throne, and takes the book. All heaven is in ecstasy. "When he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints: and they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast re-

deemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

What a testimony is here to the worth of the Saviour's atonement! That wonderful death, which some wish us to regard as only an example of submission and perfect obedience, is far otherwise viewed by our Heavenly Father. To HIM it was "an offering and a sacrifice," and so acceptable was it in his sight, that unspeakable "glory and honour" were the reward. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth;

and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 9—11). That exaltation embraces all created beings and things. The Church and the world are included in Christ's kingdom.

The Lord Jesus governs, controls, directs all human affairs. He knows the divine counsels, and executes them. The sealed book is in His hand; every seal is opened at the right time. Events succeed each other, according to the destined order, with the utmost precision. In the Old Testament, it was Providence; in the New, it is Christ. Of the mode of the Lord's interference we know nothing. Man wills: he acts freely. Human consciousness testifies to this fact. But God also wills, and *His* will is sure to be ac-

complished. The kings of the earth do not "think so," or "mean so" (Isa. x. 7): nevertheless, the Lord is "in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth" (Job. xxiii 13). Our purposes may be crossed, because we could not provide against contingencies or foresee the future. God's purposes cannot fail, for he "declareth the end from the beginning" (Isa. xlvi. 10). How it is that man is so influenced as to become an instrument for the development and execution of Christ's plans, he still remaining free, and having no sympathy with those plans, we cannot tell. Yet the fact is not to be denied. "The wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm lxxvi. 10). It is wonderful—it is myste-

rious ; yet not more wonderful and mysterious than that there is a God, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things" (Rom. xi. 36).

"Where reason fails,
With all her powers,
There faith prevails,
And love adores."

This supervision and rule of the Saviour will continue till the end of time. The sealed book comprehends the history of all ages. The seventh seal introduces the seven trumpets ; the seventh trumpet, the seven vials ; and when the seventh vial shall be poured out, a voice will be heard "out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done" (Rev. xvi. 17). The curtain will be uplifted for the exhibition of the last scene of the great drama. Then

Christ will have "put down all rule, and all authority and power" (1 Cor. xv. 24); and when the final sentences of the last day have been pronounced the universal shout will be raised, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. xix. 6).

Attempts to chronologise are perfectly useless. Schemes upon schemes have been invented in successive centuries, and have vanished into thin air. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts i. 7). Let it suffice to rejoice in the assurance that the Lord Jesus is carrying on the government with ever-watchful care and love, and that He cannot be thwarted. Under whatever seal we may now be living, or whatever trumpet may be issuing its notes, or whatever vial

the angel may be in the act of pouring out, it matters not. Enough for us to know that our blessed Lord does not slumber ;

“ His eternal thought moves on,
His undisturbed affairs ;”

and every year furnishes some fresh **illustration** of the wisdom and goodness of His rule.

It will be profitable to select some instances which may serve to illustrate these remarks.

The rise of the Emperor Constantine may be adduced. Christianity seemed to be on the verge of ruin. By the Diocletian persecution, the fiercest that had been endured by the church, vast numbers had been swept away, places of worship had been pulled down, bibles burned, Christian ministers tortured to death,

and pagans everywhere indulged the hope of the complete triumph of idolatry. But "the Lamb" had opened one of the seals, and the reign of Constantine introduced a new order of things. It is not necessary to inquire whether his professed conversion was genuine, nor to sanction all the measures he adopted for the establishment and spread of Christianity. He was Christ's instrument, employed to rescue the Church from the fangs of the enemy. The religious arrangements of the empire were henceforth of a very different kind. True, manifold evils found their way into outward Christianity, and its civil establishment begat corruption. All this was foreseen. It was the Lord's will that His church should be subjected to various forms of trial, that human

ingenuity should exhaust itself in efforts to improve the divine system, and that after lengthened and diversified experiments men should be forced to the conclusion that the cause of God must be administered by its own laws, without addition or change. No other course is right or safe.

Let us now look at the period of the Crusades. Setting aside the theories of philosophers and historians respecting those events, and judging only by results, may we not infer that it was the will of Christ that Europe should emerge from the thick darkness which had covered her, and that this was to be largely effected by the importation of knowledge from the East, through the indirect influence of crusading expeditions? If, on the other hand, it be

affirmed that the crusade against the Albigenses at a later period, was one unmingled outbreak of demon-like fanaticism and cruelty, causing horrible devastation, an inquirer may be permitted to ask whether this also, terrible as it was, was not part of the Lord's plan? For it is a fact that multitudes of those Albigenses escaped, and, being scattered abroad, preached the word throughout Europe, in secluded nooks and mountain recesses, where true religion lay hid, till the time of the manifestation, in the sixteenth century.

And what shall we say of the *Reformation*? Was it not the Spirit of Jesus, enlightening, rousing, sanctifying, restoring, bringing to view long-hidden truths, and laying bare errors, follies, and evils which had

supplanted the Gospel, and ruined millions of souls? Was it not by the power and skill of "the Lamb of God" that Charles V. and Philip II. were baffled and thwarted at every point, and that Henry VIII. became an unwilling instrument of reform?

The *settlement of North America* was another of those striking events in which the interposition of the Head of the Church was manifestly seen. The Stuart kings of England sought only their own selfish ends, and hoped to play a successful game of despotism when they so harrassed the servants of the Lord that they were fain to leave home and country, and settle in desolate wilds, that they might have "freedom to worship God." But the Saviour had high and glorious purposes to ac-

comply. He designed North America to be the refuge for the oppressed, the stronghold of truth and liberty, the light-houses of the world. His designs have been in course of development for two hundred and fifty years, and there is yet a splendid future to be unfolded.

Nor is it to be overlooked that the remarkable spread of the English-speaking races in all parts of the world is accomplishing vast and beneficial changes. Issuing originally from that small island on the western coast of Europe, they have covered a large portion of North America; they have taken possession of the East and West Indies; they have peopled Australia; they have brought South Africa under the power of civilization and Chris-

tianity ; their language is spoken even in the islands of the Pacific, and is now become the medium of communication between man and man in countries the most remote from the centres of knowledge.

These and similar events are regarded as signs of progress, and hailed as tokens of the advancement of the age. And so they are. But that is not all. They are parts of Christ's great plan of empire—the empire of truth and holiness. During the last eighteen hundred years the Saviour has been opening the seals. The process is still going on.

Yes ; it is going on. In the stream of knowledge, as it flows in these days, widening, deepening, and fertilizing, there is a strong under-current of Atheism. Pseudo-

philosophers show themselves to be the descendants of the ancient "fool" who "said in his heart there is no God" (Psalms xiv. 1). They have only one way of explaining the phenomena of the universe. They refer everything to law—rigid, unalterable law—and reason about it so learnedly, and, as they imagine, so conclusively, that the hands of the Almighty are tied; He who "measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span" (Isa. xl. 12), is bound by stern decrees of fate; the supernatural is eliminated; miracles are fabulous; man and philosophy are all in all; with this variation in the tone of sentiment, that God is in everything, and everything is God—which is, "by interpretation,"

“there is no God.” So the sinner would have it!

Even Christians are sometimes tempted to say, “Where is the promise of His coming?” They look at the state of the world, and see three-fourths of mankind doing the will of the evil one. They watch the progress of missions, mournfully musing on the slowness of the movement. They compare professed Christianity with the original picture, as drawn by the Apostles, and confess that the want of resemblance is painfully evident. They lament that so large a portion of the literature of the day, that part especially which commands the attention of the young, is unchristian. They listen to the scoffs of the infidel, and note the antagonism of some of the renowned

votaries of science to the claims of revelation. They now and then hear sermons in which there is very little of Christ, and grace, and holiness. And then they look upward and exclaim, half distrustfully, "How long, O Lord, how long?"

Courage! courage, ye sorrowful ones! The Lord has not forgotten Zion. The vessel may seem to be in troubled waters—

"Loud roaring, the billows now nigh
overwhelm;
But skilful the pilot who sits at the helm."

We are apt to forget that some trains of events require much more time for their development than others, and that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. iii. 8). The seals do not repre-

sent periods of the same length. If the roll covered by one seal may be read in a hundred years, it may take a thousand to read the next. God's chronology differs from ours. When we imagine that a series of changes is approaching its end, it is just possible that it is only at the beginning. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. lv. 8).

But Jesus reigns, notwithstanding hindrances, and reverses, and temporary defeats, the great cause is marching on. The Church will require to be purified and revived to a vast extent, in order to fit it for the grand victory yet to come. That also shall be done. Then the great battle will be fought. After that the Lord will come "to be glorified

in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe " (2 Thess. i. 10).

We will trust and hope. The Church is safe. And every believing soul is safe. Those who are *in* Christ become *like* Him, and they shall reign *with* Him hereafter. The season of trial may be severe, but it is sure to be short. " Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory " (2 Cor. iv. 17).

Let us learn, then, to think of the Saviour as continually engaged for us. And let us bear in mind that though the existence of evil is a dark enigma, it has furnished us with the means and opportunity of contemplating the Divine government in forms and aspects which would have been otherwise hidden

from us. We know much more of God than we should have known if there had been no resistance to Him. His power, His wisdom, His goodness, long-suffering and truth have been placed before us in the chequered history of the Church, in ever fresh and varied points of view. Every new manifestation of sin has occasioned a counter-manifestation of the Divine wisdom. But for the rebellion there would have been no redemption, and without the redemption, how little should we have seen of God's ways ! Now, we behold His all-sufficiency. We adore Him who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working," and we rejoice that He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Isa. xxviii. 29 ; Ephes. iii. 20.)

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAMB LEADING THE FLOCK.

“I BEHELD, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

“And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen : Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and

power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

“ And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes ? and whence came they ? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple : and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more ; neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of

waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 9—17).

This is a glorious vision. Here, on earth, the Church passes through "great tribulation," and, like her Lord, is generally "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. liii. 3). She has to fight her way through hosts of foes, who are bent on her destruction, nor could she have survived their attacks had not the Captain of salvation been always at hand to strengthen and protect her. Although her armies are continually dying in the field, they quickly reappear, in safety and bliss; and after successive generations have passed away, the close of the conflict will be celebrated at the meeting of the "general assembly and Church of the first-born" (Heb.

xii. 23). The happiness of that triumphant state is briefly glanced at in the passage which has been quoted. It is rest, satisfaction, all wants supplied, the springs of sorrow dried up, fellowship with God and with one another enjoyed, never more to be interrupted. The peculiar feature of the blessedness of the glorified is, that "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters."

Will this be literally verified? Will the Redeemer Himself, in His exalted human nature, His "glorious body" (Phil. ii. 21), guide His people while they survey the scenery of heaven? Shall we hear from His own lips the story of the salvation? And shall we follow him from one bright spot to another, listening

with intense interest to details which will throw new light on the mysteries of Gethsemane and Calvary? What teachings will those be? Will not our hearts "burn within us," as discoveries succeed one another, with ever-increasing brightness? And if, in this world, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18), how much more wonderful will be the effect, how much more complete the transformation, when we shall "see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2).

Or, it may be that angels and eminent saints will be deputed by "the Lamb" for this purpose. The former are subjected to His power and control. They are *His* "holy angels" (Matt. xxv. 31; 2 Thess.

i. 7). And as they are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. i. 14), it may be that their ministry will be continued, and that after having attended the saints during their pilgrimage on earth they will be commissioned to introduce them to the glories of heaven. Then they will tell us of the creation, and how they felt as successive worlds burst upon their view, when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job. xxxviii. 7). They will describe their state of suspense and anxiety, when untold centuries rolled along, and the earth was so slowly developed into a dwelling-place for intelligent beings. They will inform us how they watched the manifestations of

God during the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, wondering when and how "the desire of all nations" (Hag. ii. 7) would come. They will recite the history of that night when they hovered over the plain of Bethlehem, and first sang the song of redemption, re-produced by millions of voices in all following ages. They will relate their various experiences as they became better acquainted with the great deliverance, and learned more fully to appreciate the wisdom and love of God; and they will communicate such knowledge, and give such answers to inquiries as shall enable the redeemed to enjoy their new abode, and fit them the better for its peculiar duties and engagements.

The saints of past ages may be

supposed to be similarly occupied, as accessions are constantly made to the heavenly society. Abraham will never be weary of recounting the trials of his faith. Moses will give new touches to the history of the deliverance, and tell the tale (as yet untold here) of the forty years' wandering in the wilderness. Daniel will describe his feelings during the night that he spent in the lion's den. Paul will give an extended commentary on 2 Cor. xi. 23—28, a commentary long looked for by the Church. John will exhibit Christianity in its earliest struggles with error and superstition in Asia Minor, after the other Apostles had entered into rest.

By whatever means and instrumentalities he may choose to employ, the Lord will lead his people

to "living fountains of waters," where they will be ineffably refreshed. The Church will behold the glory of God—in Himself, in His perfections, in His providence, and in His watchful, fatherly care, as manifoldly displayed in individual experience as well as in the general progress of the cause; and as she beholds she will admire, adore, and love. The religion of heaven is marked by humility and intense fervour. If of the believer on earth it is said,

"The more Thy glories strike mine
eyes,
The humbler I shall lie,"

much more may it be affirmed of the saints in bliss: they "cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord" (Rev. iv. 10, 11). All they see, all they enjoy,

all the light that is cast on the government and grace of God, excite gratitude and gladness; while, as the prospect becomes wider, and their faculties enlarge with the view, the sense of the incomprehensible deepens. The nearer they are to the Most High, the farther off they seem to be. The emphatic words of Scripture acquire new meanings. Christ is God's "unspeakable" gift; his love "passeth knowledge," his riches are "unsearchable" (2 Cor. ix. 15; Ephes. iii. 8, 19).

With such experience, how glorious will be the communion of saints! What blissful interchanges of thought and feeling!

“There on a green and flowery mount,
Our weary souls shall sit,
And with transporting joy recount
The labours of our feet.”

We shall become acquainted with those who were saved from the lowest depths of depravity and vice, and we shall listen to them with infinite delight while they relate the manner in which they were rescued from the bondage of sin, and brought into the "glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 21). The Manassehs of the former dispensation, the Sauls, and the Augustines of the present, and such servants of God as John Bunyan and John Newton, of modern times, will narrate their conversions, and tell how "marvellous" was the light into which they were brought, and what ecstasy of joy pervaded their souls when they were enabled to say of Jesus, respectively, "He loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

We shall learn much more than could have been known on earth of the diversified methods of mercy and power by which the Saviour has carried on His work from age to age. The secret history of the Church will be unveiled to us, solving many an enigma, untying many a hard knot, and removing many a difficulty that had baffled the skill of successive inquirers. "The crooked will be made straight, and the rough places plain." There will be at length a just and impartial estimate of character. Some who have been called saints, and worshipped, will be seen to have been great sinners. Transactions, which at the time were thought to be barely defensible, will be viewed in connection with the motives from which they sprung, and pronounced Chris-

tian. Events that seemed so darkly mysterious as to defy all attempts understand them, will be contemplated in their relations to the best interests of man, and in their bearings on personal holiness and the advancement of the welfare of the Church. Many a Christian who went sorrowing to the grave on account of some heart-rending bereavement will rejoice in witnessing the blessed results in the conversion of loved ones who remained, whose union with him in heaven he had scarcely dared to hope for. Many a pastor, whose want of success had weighed him down with grief, will welcome to glory those whom his last labours on earth had roused to thoughtfulness and prayer. Many a martyr will hear with grateful satisfaction of the progress of truth in

the country which rejected his testimony, and will receive into the "everlasting habitations" some who had mocked his dying agonies, or even procured his death, but were pierced to the heart by his patience and steadfastness.

It is said that the Lord Jesus will come the second time, "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. i. 10). These are peculiar and emphatic words. The saints are "conformed to the image" of their Lord (Rom. viii. 29), and whatever in them is excellent is therefore admirable; yet not they, but Christ "in them" will be "admired" at the last day. Every one of them had said, while in the church below, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. xv. 10).

The glory of that grace will appear in the infinite variety of character, talent, and power, taken possession of by the Lord, and used for His service. It will be seen that as the Divine origin of Christianity is proved by its adaptation to the state of man in all countries, under all forms of government, and in every condition of society, so the glory of the Saviour will be confessed when it shall appear that in carrying on the affairs of His kingdom all kinds of qualifications were employed. The sanctifying, ennobling influences of grace were exercised under the most unpromising circumstances, men who would have been rejected by earthly employers were found, when "joined to the Lord," prepared for the highest duties, and fitted for agencies involving respon-

sibilities of the most serious character. Opposite qualities were consecrated and subdued to the Redeemer's will. The fearful and the impetuous ; the dull and the acute ; the lamb-like and the lion-hearted ; the cautious and the daring ; the men of contracted views and the bold thinkers, all, all have been enlisted into the service, and all have found their proper places and their appointed work. And Christ will be "admired" in all ; in the "sons of thunder," and in the "sons of consolation ;" in Chrysostom, the "golden-mouthed," and in the Vaudois barb ; in John de Wycliffe, the Bible translator, and in the weavers and husbandmen who were converted to God by means of that Bible ; in Melancthon, the learned professor ; and in Menno Simon,

the plain and sturdy Baptist; in the lawn-sleeved bishop, and in the tinker of Bedford. There, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all" (Col. iii. 2).

Still more admirable will be the union and harmony of the glorified. In the presence of "the Lamb" all bickerings will cease, all differences will vanish away. We may not be able to conceive of the nature of the process by which jarring minds will be welded into one; but of the reality of its blessed results we cannot doubt. The Saviour's last prayer will receive its full illustration in the completeness of the answer. All will "be one," and they will not wish to be otherwise,

for the spirit of the sect will be dead. Jerome and Vigilantius will walk side by side, being of "one heart and one soul." Luther and Zwingli will substitute sweet communion for bitter dispute. Wesley and Toplady will hold holy fellowship together. The din of controversy is hushed for ever. At last the disputants understand one another, for in the light of God they "see light" (Psalm xxxvi. 9), and are no longer deceived by the distortions incident to earth's foggy atmosphere.

And it is "the Lamb" that leads them. Whatever increase of knowledge, whatever depth of emotion, whatever thrilling delights may characterise the heavenly state, all is traced to one source. The redemption in Christ Jesus is the food

of the souls of the blessed. At every turn the cross rises to view and reminds them of their obligations. And as, while they were on earth, each one "mourned apart," absorbed in the contemplation of His personal guilt, so, in glory, amid the general acclamations, and the enthusiasm of the great triumph, every believer will be penetrated with wonder at his own share in the blessedness. *Here* he sung:—

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He to save my soul from danger,
Interposed His precious blood."

There, while his voice will be lost in the mighty thunderings of the victory-shout, his heart will be melted at the thought of his unworthiness, and he will be ready to exclaim, *Why me, Lord? Why me?*

It is one theme. Will that one theme suffice? Will there not be a longing for variety? Ah no! There are no limits to "the power and the wisdom of God," as displayed in "Christ crucified." The more deeply they are studied in their connection with the great salvation, the more wonderful will they appear. Every event in the history of the Church, every variety of Christian experience, all the diversities of talent and acquisition, and their application to Gospel labour, together with the innumerable forms of suffering which call for divine aid, furnish fresh and ever-varying illustrations of the grace of the Lord Jesus. The more saints in heaven, as they become fully acquainted with these things, will be smitten with astonishment. New glories will shine upon them

perpetually. Contemplating the love of the Lord in its innumerable aspects, they will strive to comprehend "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." (Ephes. iii. 18), and will acknowledge the impossibility of the attainment. There will be no sameness, no cloying. The impulses of gratitude and love will be re-quickened at every step of their progress; and, as the Divine leader conducts them along the heavenly plains, bringing under their view new instances of the "power and wisdom," they will be filled with "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter i. 8).

Brethren in Christ! Let us rejoice that we are even now under the guidance of "the Lamb." Ere He left them, Christ promised His disciples that He would be with them

“always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. xxviii. 20). We are taught that “we have a great High Priest that is passed unto the heavens,” and are, therefore, encouraged to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. iv. 14—16). We are reminded that He “is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. vii. 25). He is continually engaged on our behalf. This is not merely a doctrine to be believed—an integral part of our theology. It is a fact to be realised in all its fulness of meaning—*Jesus acting for us in heaven.*

ARE WE ACTING FOR HIM? That, and nothing less, is personal Christianity.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE : THE NEW JERUSALEM.

THE blessings bestowed by divine grace upon believers are illustrated in the Scriptures by figures derived from the nearest relationships. Our Lord said, " Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother " (Matt. xii. 50). The Apostle John thus expressed his admiration of divine love ; " Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God " (1 John iii. 1). Even the marriage relation is selected, as furnishing apt and striking views of the union consti-

tuted between God and pardoned sinners. It is not enough that they are forgiven, justified, assimilated to the Saviour, placed under a course of training for the "inheritance," which is "reserved" for them (1 Pet. i. 4, 5). They are members of a spiritual body which stands in the closest fellowship with the Redeemer. So the Church sung in old times, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh Himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isa. lx. 10). And Paul, describing the gracious act, says, "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He

might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephes. v. 25—27). The song of Solomon has been generally considered as susceptible of a spiritual interpretation of the same kind. Many excellent divines, however, strongly demur to that view. Be that as it may, the marriage relation is employed to represent the union between Christ and His Church. Virtually, it exists already. But as all that is done on earth is only preparatory, it may be more scriptural and safer to state that the earthly condition of the Church is that of betrothal; the actual marriage will be consummated in heaven. This

seems to be the meaning of the passage just quoted; and it accords with the representation given in Rev. xix. 7—9: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And He saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Another figure is introduced in the twenty-first chapter of the same book. The glorified church is likened to a city. It is God's city—the metropolis of His empire—the place of His abode. Jerusalem was the city which the Lord chose, "that

His name might be there" (2 Chron. vi. 6). In the symbolical prophecy of Ezekiel, in which the arrangements and divisions of the city are minutely detailed, the description closes in these significant words, "The name of the city from that day shall be, the Lord is there" (Ezek. xlviii. 35). Now, the literal Jerusalem typified the "Jerusalem which is above." And whereas "the holy city, new Jerusalem," is represented as "coming down from God out of heaven" (Rev. xxi. 2), that statement is intended, as some think, to convey the idea that the earth, purified by the general conflagration, will become the central spot, the dwelling-place of God with His people.

We need not dogmatise on such a point. Wherever God dwells—

that is, especially manifests His glory to His servants—there is heaven, whether it is here, or in Jupiter, or in Neptune, or one of the remotest stars. God's presence will make any place heaven. Wherever it may be, holiness will be characteristic of the place and the people. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Rev. xxi. 27). "Righteousness dwelleth" in the "new heavens and the new earth" (1 Pet. iii. 13). "The bride, the Lamb's wife," will not have "spot or wrinkle." Heaven will be safety, and rest, and joy, and holiness interwoven with all.

"O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God,
And flesh and sin no more control
The sacred pleasures of my soul."

If, by God's grace, we reach heaven, we will be perfectly holy. Into the "Jerusalem above" nothing "that defileth" shall enter.

Not even a thought. One of the Psalm-writers said, "I hate vain thoughts;" and David prayed thus—"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer" (Psalm cxix. 113; xix. 14). Here is the difference between a mere professor and a genuine Christian. The former is careful enough of his words. He is scrupulously exact. No rude or impolite expressions will issue from his lips. He will not utter a word that savours of unsoundness, either in faith or morals. But his thoughts are his own; and as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov.

xxiii. 7); what he is is known only to God, who "searcheth the hearts" (Rom. viii. 27), but whose power and prerogative in this respect are little regarded by outside Christians. Conversion affects a mighty change. The promise of the new covenant is fulfilled in the bestowment of the "heart of flesh" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26)—a tender, a sensitive, watchful, and anxious state of mind—a holy jealousy—a fear to sin—an abhorrence of spiritual vagrancy. Perhaps it cannot be better expressed than in the words of quaint Thomas Fuller, the Church historian, who, when he appeared before the "Triers" in Oliver Cromwell's days, and was asked for the evidence of his being in a state of grace, replied, that "he could appeal to God that he made conscience of his very

thoughts;" with which answer his examiners were satisfied. But "vain thoughts" and vagrant affections will strive to get a lodgment. Unholy influences are ever at work. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephes. vi. 12). In what way the ministers of evil gain access to us, and how their suggestions are to be distinguished from the workings of our own imperfectly sanctified imaginations, we may find it difficult to decide. But the facts are clear. We are conscious of weakness, of wandering, of worldly affections, of inability to restrain the roving tendencies; and we lift up our souls to God, adopting the prayers of

ancient saints—"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity" — "Unite my heart to fear Thy name" — "My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken Thou me according to Thy word" (Psalm lxxxvi. 11; cxix. 25, 37).

Who does not long for a better state? And since that better state involves the exclusion of everything "that defileth," the sanctification then to be attained will reach the inmost thoughts and affections. There the emancipated spirit will be steady "as the needle to the pole." In a higher, nobler sense, the saint will exclaim, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed" (Psalm lvii. 7). Nothing will be seen, nothing will be heard, nothing known, tending to direct the mind from heavenly thoughts

and aspirations. The eye will no longer sorrowfully "affect the heart" (Lam. iii. 50). The "Bride, the Lamb's wife," will be "all-glorious within."

And what shall we say of *words*, by which intelligent beings hold intercourse with each other? "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue" (Psalm xxxix. 1). A religious inquirer asked a good man one day for a lesson, who gave him this text: a month afterwards, as he passed by again, he was asked if he did not want another lesson, "No," he replied: "I have not learned *that* yet." The Apostle James has drawn a frightful picture of human delinquency. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our mem-

bers, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (James iii. 6). God's people have need to be continually on their guard in this matter. There is much sin committed, even among those who are called by "that worthy name" (James ii. 7). Sometimes, by not speaking at all—as when we refrain from reproofing sin, or from bearing our testimony in favour of truth and holiness—sometimes in speaking too little—indulging in reserve, restraining freedom of utterance, and checking the outflow of brotherly speech; sometimes in redundancy—such as "foolish talking and jesting" (Ephes. v. 4)—complaining words—the utterings of suspicion, or of depreciation of character, almost

amounting to calumny — and thousand varieties of sins of the tongue, committed every day and every hour, Lord's days not excepted. We can scarcely wonder at the Psalmist's passionate exclamation, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness" (Psalm lv. 6, 7). And we all have need to remember the apostolic exhortation, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how ye ought to answer every man. (Col. iv. 6).

There will not be an idle word in heaven. No harsh or unkind utterances will be heard there. Nothing will be said which the speakers should be unwilling that

God should hear. "Whisperings" will be as unknown as "swellings" and "tumults." Brethren will be transparent to each other, and there will be such frankness, and brotherly love, and confidence, that none will be afraid of listeners.

For the associations will be perfect. We are in mixed company now, and we breathe an impure atmosphere. It is a plague-smitten world. All are infected. Some are under cure, but many more refuse to take the remedies, and slander or revile the physician. Evil surrounds us in manifold forms—alluring—deception—beckoning us to destruction. Some have thought to avoid the danger by abandoning social duties and pleasures, and immuring themselves in unnatural solitude. But God has made us

men and women, and he wills us to fulfil the purposes of our being, which monks and nuns do not. Their withdrawment from the sympathies and activities of life is unchristian ; not a line in the New Testament commends or justifies it ; nor does it ensure safety, as all history shows. The soul of the ascetic is a prey to the tempter as really as the soul of him who lives in the world, although the forms of temptation in the two cases vary, being cunningly adapted to their respective peculiarities of character and state. Our Lord foresaw the peril. "I pray not," he said, "that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John xvii. 15). His disciples are "not of the world," but they are exposed to the

evil. Yet it is not his pleasure that they should "go out of the world." They must remain—each one "abiding in his calling"—"with God" (1 Cor. vii. 24), which expression necessarily implies that the calling must be a lawful one. There is a testimony to be borne—a protest to be maintained—a fight to be fought. While the Christian retains his position as a member of society, and aims to be a pattern of industry and uprightness, he must not be "unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Cor. vi. 14). His *duties* take him to the store or the farm, his *delights* are in the family. And it is in the Christian family, in the communion of saints, that he seeks and finds an effectual preservation from the evil that is in the world. Nevertheless the exposure

is perilous ; the “stranger and sojourner” is in danger of settling down as if at home ; and the air of the enchanted ground produces a spiritual drowsiness, which, if it be not resisted and shaken off, may be followed by disastrous consequences. The cautions of the Bible on this head are numerous and pointed.

Is it not delightful to expect “a better country, that is, a heavenly ?” We shall meet with no sinners there, nor any doubtful people—none but “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. xii. 23). The fellowship will be unrestrained and complete. All will be friends and brothers. There will be no lost time, no useless meetings, no unprofitable intercourse. They will always be gathered together in the

name of the Master, and He will always be in the midst of them.

And how will they be employed? One sentence expresses the whole—"His servants shall serve Him" (Rev. xxii. 3). What manner of service it will be, we are but partially informed. Fuller information would have been useless, because in our present state we can know but little, and that little imperfectly, of the mode of living in heaven. But it is evident that the service of praise will largely occupy the souls of the blessed. They celebrate the power, wisdom, and goodness of the great Creator (Rev. iv. 11). As they contemplate his various dispensations of mercy and judgment, all subserving the purposes of redemption, they "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of

the Lamb" (Rev. xv. 3, 4). At the sound of the seventh trumpet they fall on their faces and worship God (Rev. xi. 17). When the beloved disciple saw in vision the close of the great conflict, "I heard," he says, "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (Rev. xix. 6). These representations can only be understood in connection with the belief that the leading events of the history of the Church on earth are known by the Church in heaven. The songs of the angels (they are Christ's "holy angels"), as they rejoice over conversions and victories, excite sympathising gladness among the redeemed ones, and the

arches of heaven re-echo the universal shout.

But this is not all. There will be service, in the true meaning of the word, although we are at present unacquainted with the forms which it will assume. On what errands of love we may be sent—what exploring tours may be undertaken, in quest of manifestations of God, hitherto unknown—what duties, novel and glorious, will be discharged, bringing us into closer fellowship with the Lord, and unveiling ourselves to ourselves, in a manner which would not have taken place on earth,—all this is as yet but conjecture. “The day will declare it.”

Piety, here on earth, is the subordination of all things to God—God in Christ. Its special aspect is thus

described :—" Whatsoever, ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him " (Col. iii. 17). This piety will be perfected in heaven. It will not be fitful and impulsive, now weak, now strong; as it too often is here. It will not resemble the intermitting spring, bubbling up violently at intervals, and then unseen and unheard. It will be a steady stream, always flowing, ever full.

And Christ is the fountain, Christ is the light, the true "Sun of righteousness." Speaking of the new Jerusalem, John says, "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it; and the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God

did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 22, 23). The beauty of holiness in which "the bride, the Lamb's wife," appears, is the "comeliness" which the Lord Himself has put upon her (Ezek. xvi. 14), for He "beautifies the meek with salvation" (Psalm cxlix. 4). There will be mutual complacency. Jesus will take pleasure in the Church. The Church will be penetrated with admiration and love. All hearts will be satisfied. All faces will be aglow with delight.

" 'For ever with the Lord !'

Amen ! so let it be !

Life from the dead is in that word ;

'Tis immortality.

Here in the body pent, .

Absent on earth we roam ;

And nightly pitch our moving tent

A day's march nearer home."

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WRATH OF THE LAMB.

It is the opening of the sixth seal, thus runs the narrative:—"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich

men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains ; and said to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of His wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ?” (Rev. vi. 12, 17.)

We will not inquire into the chronology. Whatever event may be referred to, and whenever it may take place, there will be a terrible conviction that it is the fruit of “the wrath of the Lamb.” Some may wish to persuade themselves and others that it is a chance that has happened ; some may blame the rulers for real or supposed neglect,

to which the calamity as they imagine, is to be ascribed ; some may be vexed at this or that which was done, or omitted to be done, and may suppose that if it had been otherwise, the storm might have been averted. But such explanations will not meet the case, nor be admitted by the sufferers at large. They will feel, they will be made to feel, that they are enduring the punishment of sin, and they will trace all to "the wrath of the Lamb."

But wrath does not indicate passion—unbridled, causeless anger—mere violence of feeling. God's anger is ever righteous anger—anger which it would be unrighteous in Him not to feel. It is the anger of the King, whose commands are not obeyed—the anger of the judge,

who punishes violations of law. All mercy is undeserved bestowment on God's part ; the infliction of punishment is an act of justice.

Several of our Lord's parables give intimations of it. The husbandmen who slew the son of the lord of the vineyard will be "destroyed." Those who insulted the king by whom they had been invited to the wedding are doomed to destruction. "Those, mine enemies," the "nobleman" is represented as saying, "which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke xix. 27). In the overthrow of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews, Christ came to judgment on that nation. Many a time since then He has come, though unseen by men, and employed the

conquerors of the world in executing holy vengeance. He will continue to do so, for "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. xv. 25). Then, at His second visible coming, He will be "revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 7, 8).

And now, what shall we say of "the wrath of the Lamb?"

It will be *well-grounded*. The merciful, loving Jesus cannot be angry without cause. Those who are "incensed against Him" (Isa. xlv. 24) have no reason for their opposition, no excuse for their resistance. The persecutors of all ages, Pagan, Papal, and Protestant

(would that we had no Protestant persecutions to confess and deplore!) have been instigated by sheer malice. Christ's people did them no harm, but sought their best, their highest good. Nero, Decius, Diocletian, Julian, and other heathen rulers, will be "ashamed" and confounded when they see Him on the throne, and receive the final sentence, dooming them to irrevocable woe, from the despised Galilæan. Such men as Pope Innocent III., Alva, Francis I., Dominic, and the infamous herd of Spanish and Roman inquisitors, will be "ashamed" when they see their victims on the right-hand, shining in glory and bliss, and hear the righteous Judge utter the awful word, "Depart!" Jeffreys, whose *fierce* invectives and cruel judg-

ments struck terror into the hearts of so many, will be "ashamed" when the truth bursts upon him, and the "Lord of life" appears as the friend of those whom he trampled on without mercy. And unbelievers of all ages, and classes, and varieties, from the God-defying ones, who spent their lives in poisoning the public mind to those who "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. ii. 12), will be "ashamed" when they discover (though too late) that sin is "no trifle," and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31). There will be no excuse for them. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God" (Rom. i. 21). Opportunities for knowing the will of the Lord were

enjoyed by all, in a greater or less degree. The works of God revealed "His eternal power and godhead" to those who had not the written word, while those to whom the revelation was given had full means of instruction. They will be justly punished for misimprovement and neglect, although not in the same proportion. As there will be degrees in glory, so there will be also degrees in suffering. He who misused ten talents will endure a severer punishment than he who was entrusted with only one. Everyone will "receive the things done in his body" (2 Cor. v. 10). The awards of the last day will be infinitely varied and confessedly equitable. "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law

shall be judged by the law " (Rom. ii. 12).

"The wrath of the Lamb" will be *impartial*. Here, vile men sometimes escape punishment. The proof of crime may be defective; or a legal quibble averts judgment; or powerful influence is exerted on the criminal's side; or hard swearing robs the jail of an inmate, perhaps the gallows of a just prey. But when Jesus shall "sit upon the throne of His glory," no such misadventures will occur. There will be no favouritism *there*; no mistaken decision; no error in judgment; no innocent sufferer; no escape for the condemned; no delay of punishment; and no appeal. "Lord, Lord," they will say, "have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out

devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 22, 23). And the sentence will be executed at once. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. xxv. 46).

"The wrath of the Lamb" will be *irresistible*. "Who shall be able to stand?" "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Matt. xxi. 44.) There will be no possibility of rescue. Men may find shelter from a storm; but the earthquake spreads desolation from which none can flee, and the volcano vomits forth irretrievable ruin; so, when the Lord's wrath is "kindled but a

little" (Psalm ii. 12), sinners may comfort themselves with dreams of avoidance or cessation; but the announcement of the final award crushes all hope. They cry to "the mountains and the rocks" in vain.

"The wrath of the Lamb" will be *everlasting*. "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever" (Rev. xiv. 11). If there is a heaven, there is also a hell: if there is no hell, there is no heaven. The duration of each is the same, as our Lord Himself expressly declares, using the same word to characterise both, as Dean Alford rightly translates the text—"And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life." Punishment is neither propitiatory nor purifying. The New Testament knows of no pur-

gatory. And even those who hold that fable regard purgatory rather as a place for payment than for purification. According to them, the criminal may satisfy the law by suffering; but that is all. He does not become a better man; so that if their vain hope could be realised, he would still be utterly unfit for heaven, and would be a lonely, miserable man among the saints of God. When the prophet saw in vision the fifth vial poured out "upon the seat of the beast," inflicting sore punishment, that punishment had no improving effect. "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and

their sores, and repented not of their deeds" (Rev. xvi. 10, 11).

Some endeavour to evade the force of these considerations by maintaining that the wicked will not be punished at all. They will simply cease to be. They will be annihilated. And it is alleged that the words used in the New Testament on this subject — such as "perish," "destroy," always mean to put out of existence; so that when a wicked man "perishes," he goes into annihilation. He exists no longer.

It is undoubtedly true that the ordinary meaning of the Greek word used (*ἀπόλλυμι*) is to "kill," to "destroy." But such words are often used in secondary senses and with divers applications.

Sometimes the reference is to

death. "Herod will seek the young child to destroy him" (Matt. ii. 13). "The flood came, and destroyed them all" (Luke xvii. 27). "He also perished" (Acts v. 37). Now, death is not destruction. The man who dies does not literally perish. His soul lives on. His body falls a prey to corruption, but it will live again.

Sometimes a thing is said to perish when it is rendered permanently unfit for its accustomed use. So it is affirmed of the bottles that "burst" and are "marred," that they "perish" (Matt. ix. 17; Mark ii. 22; Luke v. 37).

Sometimes the idea of defeat is presented, as when a man is baffled or overcome. "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise" (1 Cor. i. 19).

Sometimes the word imports

danger, loss, injury, ruin. "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died" (Rom. xiv. 15). "Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" (1 Cor. viii. 11.) That "weak" Christian was grieved and stumbled, not annihilated, when he was "destroyed" by the inconsiderate conduct of his brother. The "destruction and perdition" threatened to those who "will be rich" (1 Tim. vi. 9), refer to the state of ruin—spiritual, and sometimes temporal—into which such men often fall, even in this life. "The world that then was," says Peter (2 Pet. iii. 6), "being overflowed with water, perished;" but it was not annihilated.

What, then, is the destruction of the soul? What takes place when

the sinner "perishes?" Does he cease to exist? Is he annihilated? Far from it. "Eternal life" is the everlasting enjoyment of God's favour in the world of purity—the holy happiness of the never-dying soul. It is promised to the believer that he shall not "perish," but have "everlasting life." To "perish" is the opposite to that "everlasting life," that is, it is the experience of the righteous anger of God against sin, in the unutterable miseries of the world of punishment. The phrase "everlasting destruction," used in 2 Thess. i. 9, is obviously equivalent to "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Rom. ii. 8, 9), with the addition of the idea of endlessness.

Once more. It is evident that the inspired writers always speak

of future punishment in terms that indicate the most poignant distress—intolerable pain. Whatever figures are employed, whatever representations are given, that punishment is something that will be *felt*. What else can be the meaning of such expressions as “weeping and gnashing of teeth”—“tribulation and anguish”—“torment?” Who does not see that they are totally inconsistent with the notion of annihilation?

“The wrath of the Lamb” will be *just*. It will be just to the *ungodly themselves*. They dig their own grave. They commit moral suicide; or, to change the mode of representation, the law takes its natural course. Having deserved punishment by their transgressions, and rejected God’s mercy, nothing but

justice remains, for there is "no more sacrifice for sins" (Heb. x. 26). The trial of the tree has been complete, and the issue is, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke xiii. 7).

We must come, then, to the conclusion, that when the wicked is "driven away in his wickedness" he enters into a state of endless woe. It is his own doing, and the consciousness that it is so, strikes daggers into his soul. Men of God strove to pluck him "as a brand from the burning," but he refused their help and rushed on to destruction. We may weep over the ruin, and be stirred up to more earnest effort for the deliverance of others; but we may not sympathise with those who shrink from the truth of Scripture on this subject,

because of its supposed inconsistency with the goodness and mercy of God. It is not befitting or reverent to indulge in objections founded on presumed benevolent feelings. It is not genuine benevolence which murmurs at the Divine justice, or would hinder its exercise. "A God all mercy is a God unjust." Our views of the evil of sin are vastly imperfect. We are utterly unable to conceive of its deserts, and we ought to shudder at the thought of charging God with harshness for punishing impenitent offenders, or thinking of him as cruel because he suffers them to continue in their misery. In such a case, pity or benevolence is out of place. We have no right to look with tenderness on those whom God's law has righteously con-

demned for their rebellion, nor to harbour thoughts which would tend to a subversion of His throne. His justice must be vindicated. He is "a God of truth and without iniquity" (Deut. xxxii. 4). It is ours to bow with submission to His holy will, and to exclaim, with the patriarch Abraham, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"—and with the redeemed in glory, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments" (Rev. xvi. 7).

It will be just to *God's people*. Thus it is written:—"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. vi. 10). "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salva-

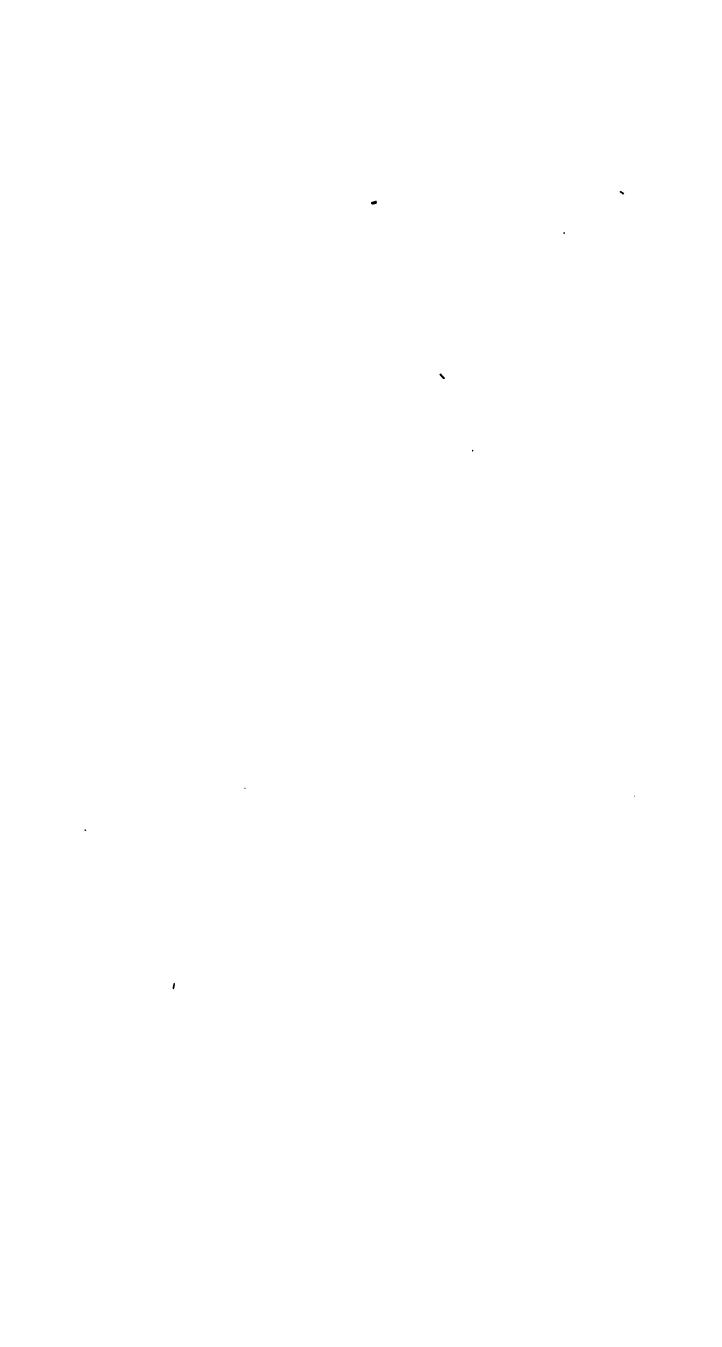
tion, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God : for true and righteous are His judgments : for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand " (Rev. xix. 1, 2). "It is a righteous thing with God," said Paul, "to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you" (2 Thess. i. 6). There will be a fearful retribution. God will vindicate his servants, and *they* will rejoice, not with the vengeful feelings of sinful humanity, but with the satisfaction of the holy at the destruction of the foes of godliness.

It will be just to the *universe*. A heavy cloud has long hung over the government of the great God. Many a one has exclaimed, "How

long shall the wicked triumph?" (Psalm xciv. 3). Many a godless man has defied his Maker, ascribed His forbearance to weakness, and braved His threatenings. But God will vindicate Himself as well as His people. The acts of His government will be explained and justified, to the entire satisfaction of all right-minded subjects. It is necessary that it should be so. Wrong is done to a law-abiding community where a criminal is not punished. But in God's government the seeming delay is not the denial of justice. "The wrath of the Lamb" is not dreaded, because the outpouring is long withheld: but when once it arises the effects will be tremendous, and there will be "no remedy."

Men and brethren! put not far from you the evil day. "Awake to

righteousness, and sin not" (1 Cor. xv. 34). "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isa. lv. 6). He is near now. And now, all-gracious and loving, Jesus delivers us "from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 10). He warns, counsels, invites, promises. May we be softened and subdued by His mercy!



CHAPTER VII.

THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE.

THE subject of the last chapter was unspeakably solemn. What more awful theme than "the wrath of the Lamb?" What sadder spectacle than that of a human being whose character and life are such as to impel us to the conclusion that in a few years, at most, the "wrath" will inevitably fall upon him?

Blessed be God, there are others, and they will be found at the last day to be "a great multitude, a number which no man could number" (Rev. vii. 9), whose final lot will be very different. They are "written in the Lamb's book of

life" (Rev. xxi. 27), and they will live for ever with him.

The sacred writer had been describing the heavenly state under the figure of a city. Keeping that representation in view, the "book of life" is the register of the citizens. The names of all who are entitled to the rights and privileges of citizenship are enrolled there.

Citizenship on earth was either hereditary, or obtained on the fulfilment of certain conditions, or purchased, or bestowed as a reward for some worthy or heroic deed. But in none of these ways could any of the sons of men lay claim to heaven. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 22), and deliverance from the penalty thus incurred is not of our own procuring, in whole or in

part. The Romish Church has invented nice distinctions. She talks of the grace of *condignity* and the grace of *congruity*, and would fain persuade us that the works of some make them *worthy* of divine favour, and that others, whose attainments are not so high, can at any rate acquire a *fitness* for mercy. This is not the theology of the Bible. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help" (Hos. xiii. 9). "By grace are ye saved" (Ephes. ii. 8).

The heavenly citizenship is indeed connected with birth; but it is the new birth. Our Lord said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). That a great change is here intimated, and that its ulterior developments are remark-

able, and of great importance, will be generally acknowledged. It will be profitable to inquire further into this matter.

Scripture employs very striking figures in the illustration of spiritual subjects. Thus, for instance, it states that sinners are "dead in trespasses and sins," the same persons being spoken of immediately afterwards as living and acting; "wherein in time past ye walked, according to the course of this world" (Ephes. ii. 1, 2). Life in sin is moral death, the absence of all spiritual vitality and vigour, that is, of love to God; and it imports legal death, the exposure of the transgressor to the condemnatory sentence of the law, which sentence can only be cancelled by the blood of Jesus. This takes place when

the sinner believes on the Saviour, receiving and resting on His atonement. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi. 31). "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. v. 21).

The soul comes into agreement with God. This, dear reader, is an essential thing. The new birth is not a mere change of opinion—the assumption of another name—the union with a new party. You may renounce error, and become orthodox—you may leave a corrupt church, and join a pure one—and remain unrenewed, after all. But have you come into agreement with God? In effecting this change there is no uniformity of method, for the

Holy Spirit accomplishes the great work in an infinite variety of ways. Sometimes there are deep pungent convictions penetrating and piercing the soul, and driving it to the very verge of despair; sometimes there are gentle drawings, and such a gradual transformation, that the moment and the manner of the spiritual passage into life are altogether hidden. The question is not, *how* is the soul born again? but, has the birth taken place? Now, by whatever method it may have pleased God to renew us, the result is substantially the same. We acknowledge His justice in the condemnation of the sinner. We "mourn apart" for our iniquity. We frame no excuses for our rebellion, nor do we shelter ourselves under any "refuge of lies." We

do not "go about to establish our own righteousness" (Rom. x. 3). We confess that as sin separates from God, and deprives the sinner of His favour, it is impossible to regain that favour by subsequent obedience, however pure, and however protracted. We flee from self, and sin, and all human confidences, to "the blood of the Lamb," and adopt Cowper's beautifully plain and vigorous expressions :—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins ;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day ;
And there have I,* though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away."

* So Cowper wrote. Not, "O may I there"—as the hymns-books have it.

And now we are safe. "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John v. 12). He is reconciled. God looks upon us in Christ. The finished work, on which we rely, is our own. We are Christ's, and therefore members of the family, children of God, citizens of heaven.

Yet let us not think that this is all, or that, if there is nothing more, the evidence of our personal Christianity is sufficiently clear and convincing. The "faith of assurance," of which some persons speak, must produce its proper effects, without which it may prove to be a delusion. While, therefore, we hold and declare the safety of the soul that believes in Jesus, that safety being founded on the Lord's finished work, it is of the greatest importance to bear in mind that the safety, if

real, is twofold. We are not only delivered from the punishment of sin, but also from its power. True faith purifies the heart (Acts xv. 9). The love of Christ implanted there cannot co-exist with the love of sin. We experience what Dr. Chalmers called "the expulsive power of a new affection." If "joined unto the Lord," we are "one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). We naturally ask, on all occasions of doubt or difficulty, "What would the *Saviour* say? How would *He* act?" We desire to have "the mind which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5). This is the godliness of the Gospel. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17). "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image"

(2 Cor. iii. 18). This was God's purpose: His people are predestinated "to be conformed to the image of His Son," and they "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth" (Rom. viii. 29; Rev. xiv. 4). John Newton pithily observes, that "Christ has taken our nature into heaven, to represent *us*, and has left us on earth, with His nature to represent *Him*."

Every genuine Christian is anxious to be known as "Jesus Christ's man." He knows that interest in Christ is to be manifested by likeness to Him. As nothing "that defileth" will enter the heavenly city, so it is equally true that Christian life here is a progressive preparation for that state. We are under training for residence in the King's palace. The process of sanctification is going on

continually; by the truth, better and better understood—by the ordinances of Christian fellowship—by the sorrows of the pilgrimage.

“Our hearts are fastened to the earth
By strong and endless ties;
But every sorrow cuts a string,
And summons us to rise.”

The old divines ~~used~~ used to speak of a *title* to heaven, and of *meetness* for it. Both are necessary. They are not to be confounded; neither must they be separated. Theoretical antinomians have blunderingly severed them from each other; and practical antinomianism has sometimes followed; but no honest Christian will be satisfied without “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Pet. iii. 21), and the outward testimony of a holy life. “Blessed

are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii. 14). There is a various reading of that text, which is adopted by Dean Alford, on the authority of the oldest manuscripts. His version is, "Blessed are they that wash their robes," &c. The two readings express the whole truth. Believers have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14), and all who have so "washed" are prepared and zealous to "do the commandments" of the Lord. Truth is understood, believed, felt, manifested. The Lord's prayer for his people is heard; they are "kept from the evil." The inheritance is "reserved" for the redeemed, and

they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. i. 5).

There is another element, which must not be lost sight of. It is perseverance. Some seem to begin well, and are hindered. In too many instances the fervour of the "first love" abates, so that it becomes a matter of doubt whether it was really love, and not rather a kind of animal excitement, an impulse produced by sympathy. But it is said of the just man that his path "is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18), and the faith of God's elect is described as believing "to the saving of the soul" (Heb. x. 39). The Lord Jesus speaks of the "well of water springing up unto everlasting life" (John

iv. 14). The order is, repentance, faith, holiness, heaven.

What shall we say, then, of those who seemingly "witnessed a good confession," but have fallen into a cold, worldly state, so that, though they have "a name" to live, they appear to be "dead?" (Rev. iii. 1). Just this, that either they never knew the grace of God, and must be treated accordingly, or that they have backslidden. If the latter, they may expect the rod. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. iii. 19). "He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Psalm xxiii. 3).

Yet let no one presume. If this reasoning be indulged in—"I was converted to God, and he who began

the good work will carry it on"—while at the same time the individual is living a careless, godless life—it is most probable that he is deceiving himself. He never was converted. "I would not give a straw," said the venerable John Newton, "for that assurance which sin will not damp." There is very great danger that such a case as has been referred to will resemble that described by the prophet: "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow" (Isa. l. 11).

Those who are "written in the Lamb's book of life" will enter the city. What is implied in that statement?

If it be asserted that the name was continued on the citizen's list because no act was committed which would incur the penalty of erasure, another question arises—How was it that no such act was committed? A hymn-writer says :—

“Trust Him : He will not deceive us,
Though we falsely of Him deem ;
He will never, never leave us,
Nor will let us quite leave Him.”

It is sometimes asserted, that “the child of God may fall foully, but not finally,” and the cases of David and Peter are cited in illustration. This may be admitted. But the fallen man, *while he is in a fallen state*, has no reason to conclude that he is a child of God. His imagined experience may be a delusion. Though he professed to

love God, it may be that it was only profession, and that he is an unregenerate being till this hour. Whatever may be the decision on that point, his immediate duty is repentance, and till there are signs of repentance no further conclusion can be arrived at. Then the transgressor, if unreconciled before, finds mercy, and is admitted into the family; if previously there had been valid evidence of sonship, he is forgiven and restored. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm xxxii. 5).

Take which view you will—either that certain persons have "kept the faith," and maintained an unsullied

profession—or, that having at any time wandered into sin, they have been brought to repentance and readmitted to their first position—so that their names continue in “the Lamb’s book of life”—we ask again, What does that statement imply?

It implies the almighty grace of God. The “living God” is the source of all life. If we who were once “dead in trespasses and sins,” now “live unto God,” it is because God himself has “quicken’d” us. If we, who were formerly willing slaves of the wicked one, now as willingly serve the Lord, the Apostle’s explanation is that He “worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. ii. 13), which harmonises with the ancient prophecy that Messiah’s

people should be "willing in the day of His power" (Psalm cx. 3). The acts are ours: *we* "will," and *we* "do." It is equally true that God "worketh in us both to will and to do." While he mightily influences us, we are conscious of free agency in the whole matter. There is grace—and there is power—and there is the exercise of the will—free, yet wrought upon. It is a knot which we cannot untie. But the facts are indubitably certain. Perhaps it is one of the theological puzzles which will be explained when "we see light." Meanwhile every Christian, all the world over, Calvinist or Arminian, will subscribe the apostolic declarations—"Not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. xv. 10); "By grace are ye saved, though faith; and that

not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them " (Ephes. ii. 8—10).

Further, it exhibits the sovereignty of Divine love. God Himself constitutes men citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, and inscribes their names in "the book of life." He is not bound to save any, and He saves whom He will. The saved have no merit: the lost have no just complaint. And inasmuch as it is "the Lamb's book of life," that expression intimates that the Son of God was a party to the whole transaction. He "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it."

Once more—we learn the faithful.

ness of the Lord to His promises. "All things are possible with God," said one of the early Fathers, "except to lie." Paul speaks of the "hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Tit. i. 2). The names were placed in the book—believers in their successive generations, were made living members of Christ's mystical body—and at the last day the Saviour-Judge will issue the invitation, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). Then will the Lord's words be fully understood—"I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all;

God should hear. "Whisperings" will be as unknown as "swellings" and "tumults." Brethren will be transparent to each other, and there will be such frankness, and brotherly love, and confidence, that none will be afraid of listeners.

For the associations will be perfect. We are in mixed company now, and we breathe an impure atmosphere. It is a plague-smitten world. All are infected. Some are under cure, but many more refuse to take the remedies, and slander or revile the physician. Evil surrounds us in manifold forms—alluring—deception—beckoning us to destruction. Some have thought to avoid the danger by abandoning social duties and pleasures, and immuring themselves in unnatural *solitude*. But God has made us

and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" (John x. 28—30). There was reason, therefore, for the triumphant language of the Apostle—"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

Finally, the union between Christ and His people is set forth. They are His, by the Father's gift—His, because they are "purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28)—His, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whose gracious influences are the consummation of

the redemption-work on earth, stamping the Lord's own likeness on the soul. And being His, He will not lose them. The great purpose must be accomplished, and the Church shall be "presented to Himself" (Ephes. v. 27). He cannot rest till all is done. "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself: that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 3). "Father, I will"—thus He breathed out His Divine desire—"that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which thou hast given Me" (John xvii. 24). That glory will be fully revealed at "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. xix. 9). Then will all the members be in their places. Not one will be missing.

The eccentric but good Rowland Hill had been preaching for the Rev. George Clayton. It was a summer evening, and the sun had just set. After the congregation had retired, the old man walked down the half-dark aisle to the door, repeating, as he went, the following lines :—

“And when I’m to die,
Receive me, I’ll cry ;
For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why.
But this I can find,
We two are so joined,
That He’ll not be in heaven, and leave
me behind.”

How wonderful the words uttered by our Lord, expressive of the union between Him and His Heavenly Father! “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work”—

“as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself”—“as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee” (John v. 17, 26; xvii. 21). No priest, no prophet, ever spoke in this manner. They would not have dared to do it. It would have been the nearest approach to blasphemy that could be imagined. But when we think of “the Word,” who was “with God,” and “was God,” all is natural. What would have been profane presumption in others, was the lawful utterance of Divine, though incomprehensible relationship. It was language peculiar to the Father and the Son. No merely human lips could use it. Incomprehensible it is, doubtless; but that is no bar to belief. Were there more *heart* in our religion we should not

allow ourselves to be perplexed by doubts and misgivings which too often rob the Christian of peace. Love would hush all to silence. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in Thee" (Isa. xxvi. 3).

It is a "*book of life.*" Is there life in our souls—the life of faith—of love—of satisfaction with God in Christ? That is the grand inquiry. Begin there. Do not go back to the counsels of eternity, and ask if your names were written then and there. Begin at God's beginning, here. Has he breathed on your soul, and said, "Live?" Is Christ "in you?" Is He your trust? Is He "precious?" Then, you are "in Christ." And he says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear

fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. . . And this the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John xv. 4; vi. 37, 38, 40).

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAMB SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

“SLAIN from the foundation of the world.” This is explained by 1 Peter i. 19, 20. “The precious blood of Christ . . . who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world.” That which God has determined to do is certain to be done. Hence, the predictions of the prophets sometimes assume the style of history, and “holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” recorded as facts many events which would not take place till the lapse of centuries, or which have not yet taken place.

It is said of God that He "declareth the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done" (Isa. xlv. 10). There is a Divine plan, of which human history is the development. Foreknowledge is equivalent to foreappointment. God "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephes. i. 11). He can never be taken by surprise. There is no shifting policy, no change of measures, in His administration. Provision is made for contingencies, but which are not contingencies to *Him*. "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought; He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Psalm xxxiii. 10, 11). God

has no afterthoughts. Whether, in the present state of our knowledge, we can reconcile this with the freedom of the human will, is another question, into the discussion of which it is needless to enter, since the only issue would be that we should find "no end, in wandering mazes lost," God purposes; man acts. God's purposes are never thwarted; man is baffled every day. God says, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. xlv. 10); man is often compelled to say, "My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart" (Job xvii. 11).

We ought to be very careful how we think and speak on this subject. It is easier to make mistakes than to rectify them. The following remarks are taken from a lecture on theology:

“It is peculiarly important, in regard to these points, to bear in mind that they are truths of pure revelation, or rather facts in the Divine government. The question is not, what we may think it fit or right for God to do—but, what God has actually done.

“The opposing theories have their peculiar difficulties and mysteries. It is our duty to adopt those views which agree best with the general tenor of New Testament representations, without slavish adherence to the phraseology of human systems.

“Truths may appear to be incongruous or irreconcilable, which are not so in reality. We are but in the infancy of thought and religion.

“Just conceptions of the state of man, as a fallen being, will be found

to be intimately connected with clear and scriptural views of salvation. Imperfect or erroneous thoughts of sin lie at the foundation of the objections usually brought against predestination and election.

“That all may be saved who will, is plainly asserted in the Word of God. But fallen man is obstinately disinclined to the submission which the Gospel requires. Who will venture to affirm that God is bound to remove that disinclination? Must not the removal, if accomplished, be altogether of grace? That granted, will it not follow, that what God has done he purposed beforehand to do?”

The death of the Lord Jesus was planned from eternity. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to

our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. i. 9). "The fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ. . . The eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephes. iii. 9, 11).

The fall of our first parents did not disappoint God. It was foreseen; yea, more, it formed part of the divine arrangement, the result of which will be the greater manifestation of the divine glory—the wisdom, the righteousness, the love of the Most High.

"What is man," said the royal Psalmist, "that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that

Thou visitest him " (Psalm viii. 4). *Why* should God devise and execute the plan of redemption? It was not because there was any necessity for such an interposition. He might have secured His own honour in some other way; nor was He under any obligation to save sinners. Statements are sometimes made which are hardly consistent with the reverence due to the Supreme Being, and imply strange forgetfulness, or even ignorance, on the part of those by whom they are uttered. They would have us believe that God would be unrighteous if he did not show mercy. They merge all His attributes in love. But to the adoption of their scheme the introduction of evil is an insuperable barrier; for, although it will be ultimately overruled for good, suffering

meanwhile ensues, in innumerable ways and forms; and how does that suffering harmonise with love? God is holy; not the one or the other separately, but all combined. There may seem, sometimes, to be collision and inter-clashing; but it is rather imaginary than real. In the misty state of our moral atmosphere our view is confused and confined: when the clouds are dispersed we shall see the full-orbed glory. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to

Him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. xi. 33—36).

The existence of evil is a terrible fact. We cannot get rid of it. It is here; and it clings to us. Would that men viewed it in its proper light! Would that religious men and religious thinkers regarded it with deep seriousness and aversion, as "an evil thing and a bitter" (Jer. ii. 19)! There would be less crude theology and more humble godliness if the enormity of sin were discerned and felt, as the Bible represents it. It is only in the light that beams from the cross of Christ that the great abomination is seen in all its horrid reality.

"From the foundation of the world." We cannot penetrate into divine councils, nor pretend to describe

the manner in which the compact (so to speak) between the Father and the Son was formed. It is enough for us to know that the accomplishment of the designs of everlasting love was committed to the Divine Son, to be effected by His mediatorial work; that the entire scheme of redemption was framed and adjusted, in all its parts, from eternity; and that the arrangements of the world-affairs of the Church's history were ordered in reference to it: that is, it was in the mind of God all the time, and the course of events was shaped accordingly.

The institution of sacrifices was one of the earliest indications of the mind of God. It was the embodiment of the general principle, which seems to have been admitted in

almost every part of the world, that "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). When Abel "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. xi. 4); when Noah commenced the new life of the world by the sacrificial act; when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as they traversed the plains and hills of Palestine, the future heritage of their race, erected altars at all their stopping-places; it was not merely an expression of thanksgiving for mercies, but a declaration of their acceptance of God's method of salvation, by atonement for sin. However limited and obscure their conceptions (and that was unavoidable), it is not to be supposed that they who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and desired

“a better country, that is, an heavenly” (Heb. xi. 13, 16), were ignorant of the meaning of the solemn rite in the performance of which they were constantly engaged. They saw the day of Christ afar off, and rejoiced in the thought that the seed of the woman would actually effect the atonement which their sacrifices prefigured.

Then came the Mosaic dispensation. For fifteen hundred years the law, which was “a shadow of good things to come” (Heb. x. 1), taught the same lesson on its diversified forms of offerings, and presented to the minds of the Hebrews, in numerous types, the merciful provision which God had made for human delinquency.

Of personal types, or supposed types, it may be prudent to speak

with modest reserve. Much more has been written on that theme than is warranted by sound principles of interpretation. But none can hesitate to believe that King David was divinely constituted a typical forerunner, as well as the direct ancestor, of our Lord and Saviour. He ruled over God's earthly people as Jesus rules the Church; and prophecy, in depicting the future glories of that Church, employs very remarkable language, applicable only to Christ, the spiritual David. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people" (Isa. lv. 3, 4). "They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King, whom I will raise

sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalm lxxii. 8); the sufferer, whose every footstep would be marked by tears and blood, but who should "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied" (Isa. liii. 11). Yea, "to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43).

And how wonderfully did the providence of God prepare for his coming! Jacob's words were fulfilled, for "the sceptre" had not "departed from Judah," (Gen. xlix. 10.) Notwithstanding disastrous wars and unheard of calamities, the Jews were preserved as a nation, and the line of David kept unbroken till "David's greater son" appeared. Forty years after his death they

were scattered to the four winds of heaven, and they still wander through the world, mingling with all people, but amalgamating with none, and Jerusalem is "trodden down of the Gentiles," and will be so, "until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled," (Luke xxi. 24.)

"The law made nothing perfect" (Heb. viii. 19). It was not a failure; though it did not accomplish the purpose which its fond friends assigned to it. It was neither intended nor adapted to save souls. Those who were saved under the law, were not saved by the law, but by the grace of God as revealed in the promise to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ, in whose redemption-work we see the divine "righteousness for the remission of sins that are past," (Rom. iii. 25). The law

showed the helplessness of fallen man, and the hopelessness of all his attempts to save himself, and it led the way to the "better hope." It was "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," (Gal iii. 24).

Philosophy had failed altogether. There were "great swelling words," and subtle reasonings, and fine-spun theories, but there was no power. "The world by wisdom knew not God," (1 Cor. i. 21.) Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, had won the world's admiration, but they could not convert it. Men grew worse under their treatment (Rom. i. 18-32.) They were "physicians of no value," Job. xiii. 4.)

But let us hear the voice of the Seer, "rapt into future times," "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul de-

lighteth : I have put my spirit upon him he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench ; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth ; and the isles shall wait for his law," (Isaiah xlii. 1—4.) So it is. "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," is loved and honoured in all civilized lands, and among the filthiest and fiercest barbarians. And "all kings shall fall down before him ; all nations shall serve him," (Psalm lxxii. 11.) That is God's plan. He has been working it out amidst the revolutions of empires and the rise and fall of dy-

nasties, and even by means of them; and he will not cease till there shall be given to the Lord Jesus "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. vii. 14).

We are brought, then, to this conclusion, that the death of Christ is the central fact, embodying the central truth of Christianity. In the religion of the New Testament, every thing looks back to it—springs from it. Christ is "all, and in all" (Col. iii. 11).

See it in the doctrines. *Election*: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual bles-

sings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephes. i. 3, 4; 1 Pet. i. 2). *Justification*:—"Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30); we are "justified by his blood" (Rom. v. 9). *Sanctification*:—"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. ix. 14)? *Adoption*:—"When the fulness of time was come God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the

law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name," (Gal. iv. 4,5; John i. 12).

Perseverance: "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them," (Heb. vii. 25). *Heaven*:—"So shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. iv. 7).

See it in experience. One text will suffice: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

See it in practice. What are the

motives? "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. xiv. 7—9; 1 Cor. vi. 20; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15). Whence comes the *strength?* "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1 Thess. v. 10); "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9); "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13).

Oh, the grandeur of redemption!
It is THE fact in God's history—His

own wonderful expedient for the manifestation of His glory, and the reconcilment of both worlds. Here, all the attributes of Jehovah are concentrated and displayed. Hence will flow rich streams of happiness and purity among the innumerable hosts of the glorified, for ever and ever ; happiness ever growing, purity becoming continually more exalted ; such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of men" (1 Cor. ii. 9 ; without intermission, and without end.

And let the believer meditate on the glory of the Redeemer. God the Father honours Him. The voice from heaven declared it at His baptism. His ascension in our nature, when He was "received up into glory ;" ratified the declaration.

He is "crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. ii. 9 ; Ephes. i. 20—23 ; Phil. ii. 9—11).

The Church on earth honours Him. He is her Head and Lord. No power or authority but His is owned in things spiritual. All His plans and projects must coincide with His will and promote His glory.

The Church in heaven honour Him. It is their employment. It constitutes their highest bliss. There they behold His glory, and join the angelic host in singing "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" It is one and the same song, for ever and ever. But there is no cloying of the spiritual appetite. The love of Christ will be viewed by them under such numerous aspects, and will receive illustrations

so fresh, and varying, and multiplied, that it will afford matter for thought and devotion during endless ages, and still "unsearchable riches" (Ephes. iii. 8).

"Jesus, my Saviour and my God,
Thy wondrous love reveal;
Let angels spread Thy name abroad,
And men thy glories tell.

"Let all with sweet and cheerful voice,
Harmonious anthems raise;
Be thou the spring of all their joys,
The life of all their praise.

"Be thou exalted in the heavens,
And o'er this earthly ball;
Let creatures into nothing sink,
And Christ be all in all."

BEDDOME.

And Jesus honours his people.
He honours them here with tokens
of His favour. Whatever excellence

dwells in them, it is the reflected glory of Christ. And with what honour does He bedeck them in heaven! Despised by their fellow-men, they are "kings and priests" unto God, and in His dwelling-place above they will "shine forth as the sun" (Matt. xiii. 43). They will share in the glory of the Great King. "To Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Rev. iii. 21). This will be the honour of all "His saints."





CONCLUSION.

DEAR READER,

YOUR attention has been called in this little book to the grace and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have been invited to contemplate His atoning sacrifice, whereby God is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26). You have seen the exercise of His power and authority in the mission of His Apostles, who still, by their writings, teach the Church. You have meditated on the Lord's control over all events, in the world and in the Church, and have been exhorted to derive comfort from the fact that Jesus reigns. You have

viewed the glory of that heavenly state, where the presence of the Saviour gladdens all hearts, and perpetual advances are made in knowledge and bliss, by means which He has Himself ordained and appointed. You have beheld afar off the spotless purity of "the bride, the Lamb's wife." You have listened to the thunder-tones of "the wrath of the Lamb." You have inquired into the proofs of citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem, and have noted the blessedness of those whose names are written in the Lamb's "book of life." And you have been reminded that all these wonderful transactions were planned beforehand, and fully provided for "from the foundation of the world."

And now, "What think ye of

Christ?" Perhaps you are convinced that the statements which have been made are well-founded, and that the atonement of Christ, His kingly rule, and other representations of His power and majesty, are Bible truths. So far, well. But this is not all.

In the year 1817, the late Robert Haldane, Esq., visited Geneva, and was the instrument of a revival of evangelical religion in that ancient city. His labours were remarkably blessed to the theological students, among others to M^{re}le d'Aubigné, now the far-famed historian of the Reformation. Mr. D'Aubigné had "heard of him as the English or Scotch gentleman who spoke so much about the Bible, a thing which seemed very strange to him and the other students, to

whom the Bible was a shut book. He afterwards met Mr. Haldane at a private house, along with some other friends, and heard him read from an English Bible a chapter from the Epistle to the Romans, concerning the natural corruption of man, a doctrine in regard to which he had never before received any instruction. He was astonished to hear of men being corrupt by nature; but, clearly convinced by the passages read to him, he said to Mr. Haldane, "Now, I do indeed see this doctrine in the Bible." "Yes," replied the good man, "*but do you see it in your heart?*"* That question was an arrow which pierced his soul; the wound was healed by the blood of Christ, which "cleanseth from all sin."

* Works iii. 358.

Something more is necessary than clearness of conception, and admission of the truth of Bible doctrines. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. x. 10).

"The knowledge of Jesus Christ," said Richard Cecil, "is a wonderful mystery. Some men think they preach Christ gloriously, because they name Him every two minutes in their sermons. But that is not preaching Christ. To understand, and enter into, and open his various offices and characters—the glories of his person and work—his relation to us, and ours to Him, and to God the Father, and God the Spirit through Him—this is the knowledge of Christ. The Divines of the present day are stunted dwarfs in this knowledge, compared with the great men of the last age. To know Jesus

Christ for ourselves, is to make him a Consolation, Delight, Strength, Righteousness, Companion, and End.”*

How is it with you? Can you affirm all this of yourselves? Is the Lord Jesus your Consolation, Delight, Strength, Righteousness, Companion, and End”—your “all in all?” Nothing else will serve as valid evidence of a state of godliness, that is, of a safe state. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. v. 17). And “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. xiv. 17).

“What is the world? A wildering maze,
Where sin has track’d ten thousand ways,
Her victims to ensnare;

* Memories of Robert and J. A. Hal-
dane, Chap. xviii.

All broad, and winding, and aslope,
All tempting with perfidious hope,
All ending in despair.

“Millions of pilgrims throng those roads,
Bearing their baubles, or their loads,
Down to eternal night ;
One humble path, that never bends,
Narrow, and rough, and steep, ascends
From darkness into light.

“Is there a Guide to show that path ?
The Bible : He alone who hath
The Bible need not stray.
Yet he who hath, and will not give,
That heavenly Guide to all that live,
Himself shall lose the way.”

JAMES MONTGOMERY.











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